

Tips for Using Descriptive Feedback to Increase Intrinsic Motivation



- 1) Descriptive feedback should be used in an on-going fashion, routinely during instruction to inform students what they are doing well, and where they need to focus attention. The timeliness of the feedback is important. If the feedback comes too far after the work was completed, the student may not remember what they had done, or may be on to another part of the project or work.
- 2) Descriptive feedback should be directed toward the learning objectives, strategy development or standards. When giving the feedback, keep the criteria limited so both the comments and student's awareness are focused.
- 3) Use the "sandwich" model for providing feedback: first comment is positive, second comment is where effort needs to be applied or what needs to be addressed, and third comment is overall what the student is doing well (Example: "You are using the correct method to solve this problem. You may want to consider using your graphing calculator to check your answer. I'm impressed how much you have progressed this semester.")
- 4) Make sure your comments are specific to what is being worked on at the time. Avoid co-mingling too many different ideas into one set of comments.
- 5) Be direct about what needs to be improved or fixed. This can be done by giving an example of how to correct the work.
- 6) Be brief with comments. Too much information is just as confusing as too little information. Plus, you don't have time to write elaborate comments and students most likely won't read them thoroughly to find the meaning. It's the quality of the remarks that affect achievement, not the quantity.
- 7) Use affirmative language when constructing your remarks. Positive remarks are more helpful to students, even when trying to correct mistakes (Example "I can see how you may have gotten confused in the story. It will be best for you to re-read the passage again to find the author's point of view.")
- 8) Do not compare one student's work to another student's work. This will only set up an adversarial learning environment. However, this does not mean that each student has a different expectation or level of standard. All students are expected to reach high and meet standards.
- 9) Attempt to make your comments to students as conversational as possible. This will eliminate the fear that some students have over assessments and evaluations. Keep the focus on the work rather than the person.
- 10) Use growth mindset type comments. The focus of your comments should be on the application of effort versus the student's abilities or capacity. (Example: "I was impressed how hard you worked on this essay.")

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